

Reading at St Andrew's - A Year in the Making

For consideration within the Egmont RfP Whole School Award



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Context

St Andrew's Primary School is located in Kettering, Northamptonshire. We currently have 350 pupils on role, Nursery to Y6. We are part of the Peterborough Diocese Education Trust (PDET) and have an Ofsted rating of 'Good'. Our numbers of Pupil Premium (PP) children, children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) and children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are above national average. Fostering a love of reading is a high priority at St Andrew's and is included in our school vision statement, as well as being a high priority on our Academy Improvement Plan (AIP).



OU Research Inspiration and Rationale

In January 2019, I attended an OU/UKLA Teachers' Reading Group. It was there I was introduced to the core strands of an effective Reading for Pleasure (RfP) pedagogy, which I shared with other staff members. We wanted to develop our practice in each strand of the Teachers as Readers (TaRs) findings and this helped us to create an action plan of how to improve RfP at St Andrew's. At the Reading Group, I was asked to fill in the 'Teachers' knowledge of Children's Literature and Other Texts' survey and I knew straight away that this would be an area of development for myself and other staff members.

I took the survey back to school and completing it made staff realise that to create a RfP community we all had to develop our knowledge of children's literature. This would then help us to buy the right resources and share recommendations with the pupils and parents. We set out to improve the range of literature available to children and create new environments for them to enjoy. We made sure library slots and RfP time was on each class timetable so RfP would become embedded in our daily practice. Reading aloud was taking place in school but we had to ensure that challenging books were being shared across each year. We also knew that we wanted to get the whole community on board, so we built time to do this also.

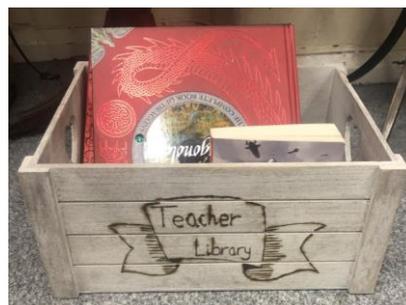
Aims

1. To develop all staff's knowledge of children's literature and RfP pedagogy.
2. To increase our range of quality literature and to give the children the choice of what they read.
3. To raise the profile of reading and to inspire the children to read for pleasure.
4. To become a RfP community.

Outline

1. To develop all staff's knowledge of children's literature and RfP pedagogy.

- ❖ To begin our RfP project, I delivered several **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions** during our INSET time with all staff, including LSA's. For us, it was really important that all staff were involved and we were sharing the same messages with all members of staff. The Research Rich Pedagogies website was really helpful, with most of the CPD content I delivered coming from here and it was all linked to the TaRs research findings. It was during these sessions that staff completed the 'Teachers' Knowledge of Children's Literature and Other Texts' survey. This was really a turning point and helped all members of staff engage with the project. We all had a shared vision of how we could embed a RfP pedagogy and how it would start with our knowledge of the research and children's literature.
- ❖ During every staff meeting held at St Andrews' **time was given for staff members to discuss books** they had read and had shared with the children. This was really valuable as it meant we began to build a core library of quality books that staff had recommended, covering a range of genres. It was a great starting point and was a good way to engage all staff. It also helped staff select the texts that would be read aloud to the children each day. A whole school plan was drawn up of challenging, age appropriate texts that would be read to the children. This was so there would be no overlap and the children were accessing a range of genres.
- ❖ As staff became more confident, we introduced **staff recommendation book boxes** in each classroom. All members of staff were included and had their own box to personalise and fill. Staff were able to purchase books for school that they could then recommend to the children. As we predicted, it was the books staff recommended that were snapped up by the children first. We also build a culture in school where children could go to other classrooms to borrow from a range of staff across the school.



2. To increase our range of quality literature and to give the children the choice of what they read.

- ❖ We knew that we needed to **increase the quality and choice of books** we were offering to the children in school. Each of the thirteen classes from nursery to Y6 was given £100 to spend updating their classroom book stock. The pupils were asked which genres, titles and authors they would like to be available. Staff were also able to guide this as they had begun to build their knowledge of quality texts.
- ❖ We had a limited range of EYFS and KS1 'book band' books for the children to take home. We spent **£2000 updating** this so the children could enjoy more up to date titles.
- ❖ **Our library underwent a huge change.** After taking feedback from our pupils we realised that our library was not being used, children were not borrowing books from there and it was terribly out of date. Some children voiced that they did not even think they were allowed in there. This became a real focus for the school and was one of the main driving forces behind our whole RfP project. Our Friends of St Andrew's (FOSTA) group raised £4000 to give to the school to improve the library. We managed to reuse bookshelves and spend a minimum amount on furniture so the majority of the money would be spent updating the literature that was offered. In conjunction with the children and all staff a new library was designed, created and filled with quality texts. It was opened by local author G. R. Dix, who came to our school as a child, which really inspired the children. Each class was given a time slot where they would visit the library weekly and it is open at lunchtime so the children can change books or sit quietly and read.



Lots of new quality picture books for use across the school.



Inspirational reading quotes and an activity table that is changed regularly.



Hundreds of new chapter books for all year groups that are accessible.



A reflection area with religious texts, including Bibles.



Magazines and newspapers that we have subscribed to.



A huge range of non-fiction texts.



A large selection of books aimed at our nursery and EYFS children.



Author G. R. Dix opening our library.



Themed books regularly changed and a computer with an Interactive Whiteboard (IWB).

3. To raise the profile of reading and to inspire the children to read for pleasure.

- ❖ At St Andrew's we love to celebrate **World Book Day (WBD)**. The children love getting their book tokens but they can often be left in book bags and not redeemed. We decided to walk all of our children, in full costume, to our local Asda to swap their token for a book. Asda were amazing and let the children all go through the tills and choose their own book to take home. Asda did a feature on our school to show they are supporting our RfP project.



Teaching assistant Alex Elston said: "All the children had a great time – it was brilliant. We're so thankful to Asda and Liz for supporting what we're doing. We want to raise reading standards across the school and we've launched lots of initiatives about encouraging the children to read for pleasure."



The pictures Asda took to display on their website.

- ❖ Every class **regularly change their book corners and reading displays** to continue interest and engagement. Children are often involved in creating their book corners and they are regularly topped up with new quality literature.
- ❖ **The 'Book Barn'** was created so children could read outside whatever the weather. It is waterproof and filled with great books for the children to read. It also has comfortable seating and blankets for the children to cosy up in.
- ❖ **Our 'Book Boats'** have been hugely popular. The children choose their book, grab a blanket and snuggle up in a boat. The children use these completely unprompted every playtime and lunchtime. Some children have also copied this idea to create their own book boats at home.



- ❖ We invited **Author G.R Dix** into our school to talk to the children and we also had a visit from Kev Sutherland, a comic artist. The children were inspired by both of these visits so we will definitely continue to invite authors into the school.

- ❖ **Using Twitter has been a great way to connect** with other teachers, authors and illustrators and improve our RfP practice. I used this platform to contact a range of different authors and illustrators, who wrote to our children. The children just couldn't believe that they were communicating with their favourite authors and all the postcards that were sent are displayed in the library. It is growing all the time.



- ❖ We wanted to create a child led group called '**Book Squad**' to motivate other children to read in school. These children are in charge of displays, help recommend texts to others and go into other classes to read aloud. We had sixty eight KS2 children apply for this role and ten were chosen at random.
- ❖ We hold regular whole school reading activities during the term. This includes **DEAR (Drop Everything and Read Sessions)**, **reading outside sessions** and we hold a **mystery reader session**. This is where the children choose the text they want to hear and a room to go in but they do not know who will be reading. The children love this and spend the week trying to guess who is reading which text.



- ❖ We have **dedicated reading book clubs** across KS1 and KS2 that are regularly attended.
- ❖ **Every half term we hold a reading assembly.** This is where new literature is shared, recommendations are made and we also share with the children what is going on in the literature world. This includes, recent books that have been published and book award winners.
- ❖ **Each class also** often introduce new strategies and engaging ways to motivate the children to read for pleasure. Some examples are, voting stations, wrapping up books and giving books out as prizes.



4. To become a RfP community.

- ❖ It was important to us that we created a whole community to support our RfP project. We started with the pupils themselves. **We gave a questionnaire to all KS1 and KS2 children** to see where our starting points were. This helped us build a picture of our reading community in school and highlighted areas of development.
- ❖ We introduced **half termly peer reading sessions.** The children love this time. Children from nursery to Y6 are paired and listen to each other read their favourite books.
- ❖ We also needed to get all our parents onboard with our RfP project. We hold **termly Reading Open Mornings** where we share research and tips for reading at home. The parents then can go and share books with their children at home. These mornings are always well attended.



- ❖ At St Andrew's we ensure that all children have their **own books at home**. Not only do we take all the children to get a book on World Book Day but we also use funding to gift our PP children with a new book, of their choice, termly.
- ❖ We have **linked up with the local library**. Their librarians have come to our school to talk to the children and we have taken children there. More and more of our families are signing up to the library and using it regularly.
- ❖ Some of our **children are taken out into the community** to take part in philosophical discussions. Different books are used as a stimulus and create great discussions between the adults and our children using the text as a focus.
- ❖ We wanted to ensure the **governors** at our school are aware of the work we do around RfP. Members of our Book Squad shared their thoughts and data with the governors about reading at St Andrew's.



Impact

- ❖ Our first aim was to develop all staff's knowledge of children's literature and RfP pedagogy. This was the starting point of our project and has underpinned RfP at St Andrew's. From this we were able to stock our school up with quality texts for the children to enjoy. We have been able to recommend books to other staff members, the children and parents. This has enabled informal book talks to take place between the staff and children. The children now see the staff as teachers who read and this has made a huge difference. Below are the thoughts of some of our teachers across the school.

The children love our reading for pleasure sessions especially our 'drop everything and read' time, even the staff join in.

To encourage the love of reading staff have our own recommendation boxes that children can borrow from also Mr Bailey has introduced a Spooky book box, aimed more for the boys as they tend to not enjoy reading as much.

Reading at St Andrew's

There is a huge buzz about reading at St Andrew's now. The children are so enthused to read and are devouring books faster than we can keep up with! They discuss their reading with passion and enjoyment which is amazing.

Since the reading training and the ~~to~~ changes that have been made at St Andrew's I have recognised the massive impact of reading children's books upon my classes learning. The children are desperate to read the books that I have read so that they can talk to me about them. My overall teaching has improved as well as the love of reading from everyone in my class.

our reads. The children have their special provisional roles (book squad, librarians) so that they can share their love of reading.

In my class, we try to ensure we read with all children every week, checking their understanding of the text, information, noticing of punctuation.

The reading competition across the school seems to have a huge, motivational impact.

Introduction of "Recommendation boxes" was amazing. Children in our class use them frequently and often like to share their opinion on ~~the~~ the book they've read.

Couple of children in my class even read for dual language books.

Regular use of Toe by Toe helped children who struggle with decoding/blending (they also have a little simpler books) in our recommendation boxes.

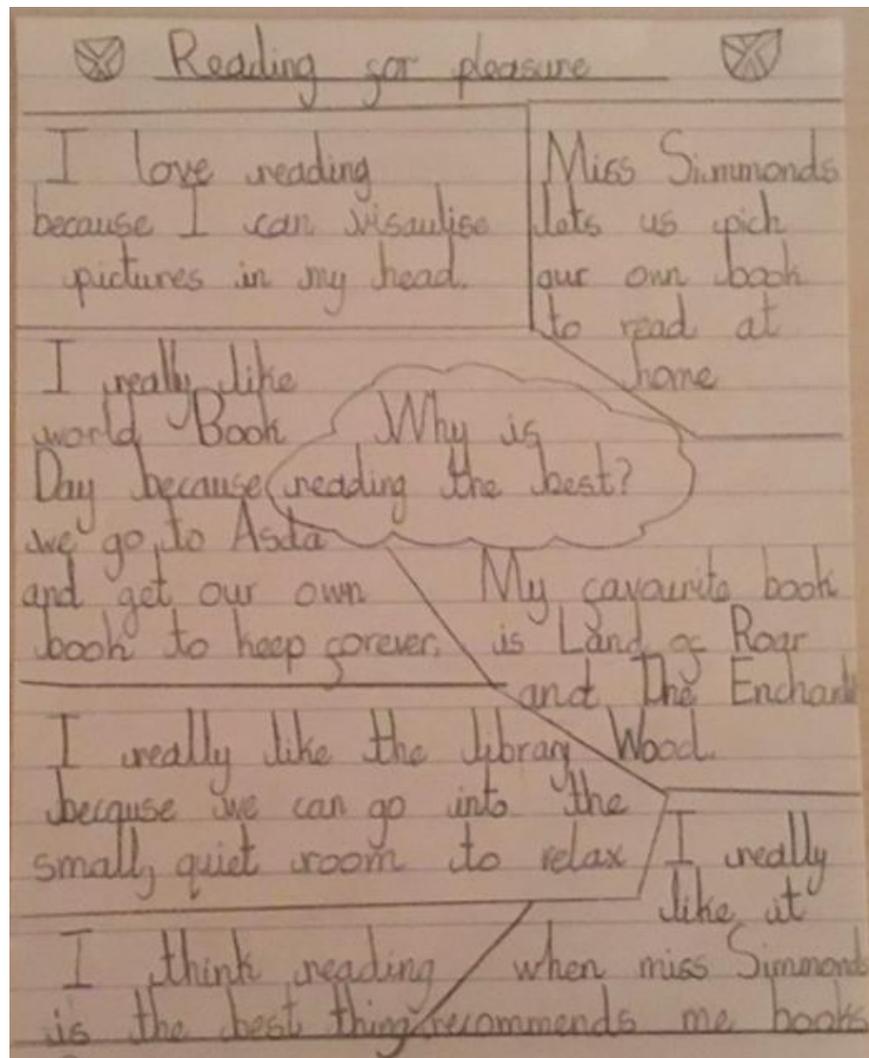
Reading for pleasure -

Children have our access to the books of their choice within the classroom as well as the library. To encourage them to read what they like we often talk about

Reading at St Andrew's has never been so important or so much fun! In the community we serve, a good understanding of reading is vital for the futures of our children. I see so many children picking up a book and reading, taking their books outside with them or choosing one from the Reading Barn. Boys are choosing a wider genre of texts and this has helped develop their ideas in their own writing. Children are excited when it's free ~~writing~~ ^{reading} sessions - they want to read as often as possible - and then put ideas gained into free writing sessions. When they change their books, there is a vast collection of books they can choose from. Many of the children

choose books from the boxes which adults recommend from their own reading. I love having conversations with children about the parts of books they have enjoyed and they love ~~my~~ hearing the parts I enjoyed. When the children aren't reading themselves, they love hearing texts being read, especially when voices are used. I also enjoy the free reading time when I can open up my kindle/book and enjoy escaping into a ~~book~~ story. It's so good to have that time and then go refreshed into other lessons. I love the buzz of children talking about their reading.

- ❖ Another of our aims was to raise the profile of reading and to inspire the children to read for pleasure. We conducted a pupil reading survey which has shown dramatic results.
- ❖ **At the beginning of the year 40% of our children loved reading and 17% of our children disliked it,** with 43% of children somewhere in the middle.
- ❖ **The most recent survey of the same pupils with the same questions has shown that now 72% of our children love reading while only 3% of pupils said they dislike reading.** Also, our latest data tells us that on average 80% of children are reading regularly at home.
- ❖ The children love the choice of literature they now have, with every child now borrowing books from the library. This is an increase of 100% as this was not happening before. Below are the unprompted thoughts of some of our Lower KS2 pupils.



I Like to read in the Library because it is very comfortable sitting on the beanbag and to change my book to a different one. My most favourite book is Rumble Star. The teachers help me read and pick good books like The Enchanted Wood. I like to pick books out of the library. I also like to read to the smaller children. I want to visit the library more often so I can read peacefully with my friends. I like when Miss Simmonds reads to us at the end of the day and I also like Miss Simmonds recommending nice books to us.

Reading for pleasure

I like the library because there's lots of books to read.

Reading is the best for you and us

Reading helps you imagine what's happening

I like to read to the little children

My favourite book was The little green petrie book

I Love to read in this school because when we come in the morning and we get to read and it makes me feel ready for the day. The library is a great place to read and sit while not talking and I like when I have some peace and quiet time. My favourite books are adventure books and I like fiction books. I loved World Book Day. I really like that we have a library because then we can read different books.

This school is the best place to read. We can read the books we like at the time we didn't read before. but I love it now. I always ask
I like to read because it's relaxing. I think St Andrew's good at helping us read. I like it when the teacher reads to us at the end of the day. I like it when we get to pick whatever book we like. I love just reading it's really fun. We get to encourage children to read.

- ❖ We wanted to include the whole community in our project. On average a hundred parents attend our Reading Open Mornings, with numbers rising each time. Parents are more knowledgeable about why reading is so important and there has been an increase of reading at home across the school. Many parents have commented on how their children are enjoying reading at home and read much more often. Children are asking for books for their birthday and Christmas presents which we had never had reports of before. Children are also creating their own reading spaces at home and families are sharing books together, which was our ultimate goal.

Reflections on Impact the TaRs Research had on Practice

Being introduced to the TaRs research (Cremin et al., 2014) has had a huge impact on our whole school community. Starting with all the staff increasing their knowledge of a RfP pedagogy through CPD has been very effective. I think increasing all staff's knowledge of children's literature was a real turning point. The staff now are informed about their read aloud choices, can recommend texts they know the children will love and discuss books with their children. Now the children see the staff as teachers who read they have become more motivated to read. They read for pleasure and not because they feel they have to.

The TaRs research has shown that having knowledge of children's literature, '*is highly significant in developing children as readers who can and DO choose to read.*' This has been true at our school as the love of reading has come from our staff and passed on to the children.

The research also states that, 'a robust reading for pleasure pedagogy encompassed four specific practices: reading aloud, informal book talk and recommendations, and independent reading time within a highly social reading environment.' Now that our staff have great knowledge of children's literature this allows them to make more informed decisions about books they read aloud to the children and how to make that time engaging and inclusive. Staff can now engage in informal book talk with the children as they have shared knowledge about the books they have read. All staff now understand the reasons to have dedicated reading time within an appropriate environment and allow time for this daily within their busy timetables.

The TaRs research has transformed reading at St Andrew's. I now can confidently say that pupils at St Andrew's choose to and enjoy reading and this will have, not only an impact on attainment, but also the rest of their lives.

Next Steps

- ❖ Maintain the 'buzz' about reading at St Andrew's by using a range of strategies including using the Book Squad.
- ❖ Ensure all staff continue to update their knowledge of a RfP pedagogy and children's literature so book talk and recommendations can continue.
- ❖ To monitor pupil RfP survey results termly, to ensure latest results are maintained and improved.
- ❖ Continue to provide opportunities for parents to come into school and enjoy reading with their children.
- ❖ Utilise our new St Andrew's TV APP to share recommendations and reading aloud.